

# The Meteor.

Lucus a non Lucendo.

VOL. 6.]

ALABAMA INSANE HOSPITAL, DEC. 25, 1879.

[NO. 19.]

## The Hospital and Meteor.

Since the first issue of the METEOR in 1872 the number of patients at the Hospital has steadily increased, yet multitudes are denied admittance for reasons declared in another column. Our METEOR has meanwhile diminished in size, and the engagements of our editor have so multiplied as to leave but small hope of realizing our desire to compensate for diminution of size by more frequent issues. We shall therefore continue to send forth our paper at such times as circumstances allow, solacing ourselves with the reflection that the more irregular our appearance the more faithful will we be to the traditions of the celestials for whom we are named.

Dr. Bryce will begin, in the Spring, the erection of a new building connecting the rear of the present Centre-building with the Amusement Hall. This addition is made necessary by the increased number of patients. The first story will be divided into a large kitchen and store-room fitted up in the most approved modern style with all late improvements for facilitating work and the comfort of the workers. The principal feature of the second story will be a circular room 32ft. in diameter, with a dome ceiling. This room, which it is intended to make as beautiful as commodious, will be fitted up for a Library, Music hall, and Lecture-room, to be used every day in the week by the best classes of patients. The regular weekly entertainments in the large Amusement Hall, to which all patients who are able to attend are invited, will be continued as heretofore.

Those who have eaten oranges grown in our conservatory pronounce them delicious in flavor and of good size. But some persons have peculiar tastes, and we do not feel willing to affirm of the positive excellence of such things until the expert of the printing office has passed upon them. As he never ventures a judgment upon a nice point until he has subjected the matter to such an ordeal as can not fail to elicit the truth, we hope that op-

portunity will soon be given him to make the experiment. If the oranges are not now to be had, apples as closely resembling them in size and flavor as possible might enable him to pronounce an approximately correct opinion upon the matter.

Our evening entertainments have of late been enlivened by some excellent vocal and instrumental music, readings and recitations.—Some of our Ladies seem to have entered upon these performances with sufficient ardor to give promise of artistic excellence.

One of our facetious patients has prepared an interesting paper on Gen. Hood's children, to be read at an evening entertainment. It is a queer compound of the pathetic and the ridiculous, such as would hardly be expected with such a subject.

The Hospital has come into possession of its coal mines and now supplies itself with black diamonds at a nominal cost. The mining is conducted on scientific methods, which reduce to the minimum the amount of manual labor to be expended. The new lift-engine and steam-pump are in excellent working condition, and discharge their functions with admirable efficiency.

In another column will be found a list of the papers furnished gratuitously to the Hospital, and which are highly appreciated by the patients. We are sorry to note the absence of the *Montgomery Daily Advertiser*, the *Mobile Register*, and a few other prominent journals.—The conductors of these excellent papers ought not to fall behind their brethren in good works, and we hope to be able in our next issue to add these papers to our roll.

New features are being yearly added to the Hospital. In making these additions, we are glad to note that a high regard is paid to the aesthetic demands of our human nature. The insane, cut off from all the enjoyments of business and general society, sorely need such diversions as can be rendered

available to those in seclusion. We note, therefore, with special pleasure, the acquisition by the Hospital, within the last twelve months, of a new Becker Brothers piano and a Mason & Hamlin organ. And in this connection we record with pleasure a great improvement in music by the patients and employees of the Hospital, due, in a large measure, we learn, to our accomplished Directress, Mrs. Johnson.

Miss Fortner, the Supervisress of female nurses, has lately been induced to take part in recitations. Her rendition of Macaulay's *Battle of Ivry*, and, a week or two later, of an episode in the life of the *Widow Bett* were highly creditable to a beginner in that most difficult and noble of all arts, Elocution. Miss Alabama Duncan and Miss Andie King, nurses, were not less successful in their renderings of selected pieces, though the latter was sometimes so carried away by the humor of her part as to participate in the role of the audience, allowing a smile to light up her visage when it should have been as grave as a dictionary.

Of the merits of Jenk's babies, as rendered by one of the printing office folks, modestly forbids us to say much. Not having been a member of the audience, we should be trespassing on the rights of others to express a decided opinion. We are, however, acquainted with some very decided convictions of the speaker, and which, doubtless, were allowed to assert themselves on the occasion: 1st, The prime requisite in recitation, is to speak so as to make every word easily heard by the audience. 2d, To pay no great regard to the movement of the hands and arms, but keep a close guard on the legs, that they do not, on an open platform, get tangled and trip each other up.

It should be easy for any one to imagine the deep delight which persons secluded from society and business, find in the perusal of newspapers. Even eminent men of the world have been known, who pre-

ferred newspapers to all other reading matter. The interests there discussed are living ones well calculated to excite interest and enchain attention. But to persons in infirm health, newspapers are especially acceptable, from the fact that no constrained attention is demanded. The articles are short, pointed and soon dispatched.

Our supplies of newspaper reading falling far short of the demand the Superintendent has lately caused a box to be placed in the Post-Office at Tuscaloosa, with a printed invitation to the public, to deposit therein old newspapers for the use of the inmates of the Hospital.

[COMMUNICATED.]

We desire to thank our kind and benevolent friend, Mr. John S. Pierson, of New York, through the columns of the METEOR, for another of his princely donations. To the patients in the Hospital there is no other source so productive of great and lasting pleasure as that afforded by books. To Mr. Pierson we are indebted for all the happiness to be derived from 291 additional volumes of choice reading matter, comprising the works of many of the best authors—Abbott, Dickens, Sir Walter Scott, Thackeray, Miss Mulock, Marion Harland, Tennyson, Longfellow, etc., besides a number of Illustrated Toy Books suited to the weak minds and childish tastes of some of our patients.

From these books there is intellectual food and enjoyment for every member of this large household, from Dr. Bryce and his accomplished corps of assistants down to the simplest and most unsophisticated mind of either patient or employee. Cut off, as we all are, from the world, its society and pleasures, the diversion and entertainment obtained by reading is highly prized.

MANY PATIENTS.

"The Burlesque and Versatile Drawing-Room Combination," is the name of a Club for Dramatic Entertainments that has lately been formed by the employees of the Hospital. C. C. Kilgore, President; S. P. Marcello, Manager; J. H. Morcombe, Assistant Manager; E. W. Davis, Prompter; James Kilgore, Secretary; J. P. Wheeler, Property Man; W. H. Evans, Assistant Property Man; W. R. Gaudelock, Treasurer; C. M. Donoho, Stage Carpenter. Entertainments will be given as often as practicable. Our accomplished Supervisor, Mr. W. C. Perkins, will act as Musical Director.

[COMMUNICATED.]

Oh, it was awful! That never to be forgotten night! As we were quietly pondering the trials and troubles of life we were aroused from our reverie by a terrible shriek for help from the ward adjoining. We rushed in that direction and found our excited friend

in a terrible state of agitation but armed and equipped for assault with intent to kill. "A huge wild animal in the dining room!" What were we to do? We got a lantern, moved very warily to the door of the room, opened it cautiously and let the light gently penetrate it, so as to reveal without disturbing the ferocious foe. Sure enough there he was and reared upon his hind legs ready for battle. We rushed toward him and for a length of time the storm of battle raged. Sad havoc was made of the furniture of the room, for every chair and table confederated with the enemy and always stood exactly where we would be sure to run against or over them. But in the end victory perched on the banners of two brave girls as they proudly surveyed the prostrate form of the dying—rat. A. D.

## THE METEOR.

Alabama Insane Hospital,

Edited by a Patient.

Tuscaloosa, Dec. 25, 1879.

### Christmas Greeting.

A merry Christmas to all readers of the METEOR! May the tide of sacred gladness as it surges round the earth sweep into deep oblivion all defilements of cankering earthly cares, and rouse to the great truth that in thankfulness and gladness is the truest worship. May all officers of the Hospital know no unusual anxiety and be able to join with full hearts in the gayeties of the festive season. May the nurses and patients have a good dinner, a bran-new joke to crack, a good newspaper to read, and find suspended on our Christmas tree a nice present prepared especially for them. May editors who send their papers to the Hospital get every cent due them from delinquent subscribers and advertisers. May all those Alabama editors and publishers who have failed to send us their papers have a bad time of it in this world, lest they miss the bliss of the hereafter. May all outside of the Hospital, except the editors aforesaid, with a world of good friends and nicest things for the palate, have an increasing regard for all public provision for the care of unfortunates, as they know not how soon it may be their fortune, (including the editors aforesaid,) by a little excess in drink, or love, or business, or religion, to be forced to make a trip of business to some Asylum.

### The Meteor.

Several considerations influenced us to continue the publication of our little paper. One was the frequently ex-

pressed desire, to that effect, of friends away from and at the Hospital. Another was our need of employment that was at the same time interesting to ourselves and useful to others. Still another was our desire to curry favor with the females of the establishment by printing their effusions. But perhaps the most cogent consideration was the firm conviction that something should be done to redeem the whole meteor business from the undeserved obloquy which had befallen it by the blundering of Tice and Co. Unlike Tice we have little reason to consult the position of the stars or to sell our predictions, but when we say "shoot!" away goes a meteor.

Although we pay little regard to the stars, like him of Asheville we do go largely by the moon. Our readers may therefore consider it as certain as figures—conditioned of course on who makes them—that our METEOR will never shoot except upon a change of the moon.

The editor is under obligations to Prof. Eugene A. Smith of the University of Alabama for a copy of his GEOLOGICAL SURVEY of Alabama for the years 1877 and 1878.

It gives us pleasure to state, in this connection, that Dr. Smith is engaged in a work in which every Alabamian who loves his State is highly interested. For several years past, he has been conducting the Geological Survey of the State without compensation, and for the efficient and thorough manner in which he has performed the work, he is entitled to the thanks and praise of our entire people.

Dr. Eugene Smith is decidedly one of the most accomplished men in Alabama; and as a skilful, practical Geologist, we doubt if he has a superior in any State. In addition to this, we are told by those who know him best, that he is altogether as unassuming and genial in his manners as he is solid and accomplished in culture.

Only the most recent cases of insanity are now received into the Hospital. This class, to which the law very properly gives precedence in the order of admission, promptly occupy all the vacancies which occur. Unless the State enlarges the accommodations there will probably be no room for the chronic or long standing cases of the disease.

### Christmas at the Hospital.

We learn that we shall have this year a celebration that will excel somewhat all our previous commemorations of the glad season. First and foremost, there will be an excellent dinner for all on Christmas day. On Christmas Eve there will be a grand assembly of the whole Hospital world in the Amusement Hall. Large tables laden with showy and toothsome delicacies

for the palate will occupy the centre of the room; New Christmas Carols will be sung by the Hospital choir, and possibly there may be some recitations of humorous pieces. Then there will be competitive trials of skill by the patients on the Jew's-harp and accordion, with handsome prizes as a reward for the most skilful performers. A Santa Claus, laden with gifts for all, will appear in the course of the evening, but whether before or after the table refreshments have been disposed of, deponent saith not. On the night of Christmas a new and very interesting Dramatic Exhibition will be given by the B. & V. D. R. C. noticed in another column.

#### Hospital Nurses.

No earthly position, in the eyes of the Great Father of all, could be more honorable than that of Hospital nurse. In all Hospitals much is necessarily left to the energy, the tact, the benevolence of nurses. Nurses have therefore the power to minister greatly to the happiness of those entrusted to them. The places of honor in this world are reserved for the rich and the talented. In the next world other standards will prevail, and good hearts will come to the front. An earthly life, however humble it may appear to many, can not be more nobly spent than in conscientious endeavors to alleviate the woful state of God's most afflicted children.

As to right deportment the Saviour's comprehensive rule is here as elsewhere an infallible guide: "Do unto all men as you would that they under similar circumstances should do unto you." Let them ask themselves how they would like their father or mother or brother or sister treated by a Hospital nurse, and they will find the path of duty plain under all the trying circumstances of their position.

Benj. W. Richardson, M. D., LL. D., F. R. S., etc., at the recent sanitary Congress at Croyden, Eng., stated that in Great Britain alcoholic beverages "directly and indirectly destroys the physical life of one hundred thousand a year, with forty per cent. of the destroyed mental life of the nation." Dr. Richardson is high authority on all questions of Medicine and Medical Hygiene.

#### Learning and Light.

We always thought so. Now we know it. The remark has often been made that persons in advance of their age are reckoned insane. Turning the thing round, those reckoned insane are in advance of their age. We knew that our folks were given to entertaining grand ideas about deposits of gold, prophecy, mesmerism, etc., etc., and had often

asked ourselves: May it not be that the veil separating the material from the immaterial world is in the case of diseased brains so attenuated as to give clearer views of the unseen? The University folks have furnished the proof. Universities are admitted to be exponents of the most advanced culture of every age. But the Alabama State University has come to us for light. A significant fact in connection with the affair is that the conduit will pass through the walls of the METEOR office—portending an application to our editor for an occasional live article for their *Monthly*. The gross material and its product, in this light business, are both of Hospital origin. The University's only care will be to have good receivers and distributors—very simple but very important requisites, young gentlemen. We conclude with a *jubilate*.

In days of yore 'twas all the talk  
That insane folks in darkness walk;  
But progress proves their way so bright  
That colleges request their light.

The first entertainment of the B. & V. D. R. C., noticed in another column, came off on the evening of Tuesday the 9th inst. The plays presented were the "Eccentric Physician in search of Natural Curiosities;" The "Murdered Guest of the Haunted House;" The "Manager in search of Talent;" The "Mystic Crew of Jolly Vocalists" accompanied with the "March of the Mulligan Guards." The entertainment was a decided success, as was attested by the outbursts of laughter from Hospital folk and visitors. We have not space to enter on details but can not omit to notice the two songs with which the audience seemed specially pleased, one of these being the song of the flea, the other having "an easy chorus" about a half-page of octavo in which the audience were requested to join. Mr. Jimmie Kilgore's timid but rascally nigger was a decided hit. To the members of the company the people of the Hospital are under obligations for two hours very pleasantly spent, and hope they will soon give the long dull nights another lift.

Any citizen of Tuskaloosa who has the good fortune to get a copy of the METEOR should bear in mind that a Contribution Box for old newspapers and other reading matter for the inmates of this institution is at the Post-Office.

One of the nurses of the Hospital being a good printer, the Editor has secured his services in getting out this edition.

The communication signed "Zoe" is good poetry but being anonymous goes to the fire-kindling box.

The Hospital makes a most creditable record this year in the treatment

of insanity. The cures were 60 per cent on admissions. About four hundred patients have been constantly under treatment during the greater part of the year.

#### Answers to Interrogatories.

QUES.—Why is the Editor of the METEOR able to get up such a paper and to write long and acceptable articles for other papers, kept at the Hospital as a patient?

ANS.—1st. It is affirmed that some facts which the editor takes for granted are not facts. Wrong facts are high evidence of insanity. Many lunatics reason acutely but their assumptions are generally wrong. The editor has ideas about animal magnetism and mind-reading which the savants deem unauthorized by any well-attested facts.

2nd. As there is manifest and latent heat so there may be patent and latent insanity; the latter under favorable circumstances might be manifested by an explosion hurtful to some-body.

3rd. Some say that he is kept here for the convenience of the Hospital, to print the poetry of the ladies of the establishment, etc. If so, the poetry-writers are to blame.

4th. He is fond of good eating, and the Matron securing this to him it is feared that if he were outside he might lack for best things for his palate and get to be dyspeptic.

5th. He is a great admirer of the ladies and if he were free might marry some poor girl and have to work so hard as to endanger his health.

6th. It is feared that his pets, the four deer, and Todd, his dog, would pine away.

7th. He might want to preach, but agreeing with none of the churches might fail to get a call.

8th. He might wish to edit a paper, but as he is neither a Democrat nor a Republican he might lack support. He has too much sense to assent to any form of Communal nonsense.

9th. Ask the Superintendent.

QUES.—Why have the flower-gardens in front of the Hospital been razed?

ANS.—It is intended to substitute plots of flowers at various places on the lawn. The gardens in front of the first section of the wings will be continued.

QUES.—Why are old cases of insanity refused admittance to the Hospital?

ANS.—On the principle of the greatest good to the greatest number. The recent cases soon recover, and are sent home leaving room for others. Chronic cases remain for years with out improvement, and hinder others from being received.

Mr. Jno. S. Pierson to whom we have been from time to time under large obligations for books, pictures, etc., etc., has lately given for our new Library, 291 volumes of books and periodicals. Our Library is named for him the Pierson Library.

Our accommodating Post-master, Judge William Miller, has at various times sent us newspapers. No donation is more acceptable to the patients. A newspaper is like a privileged hole in the canvass of a circus which enables one to enjoy the show almost as much as those regularly admitted.

Mr. Masters, the architect who drew the plans for the new important addition to the establishment noted elsewhere, is an accomplished builder and is the architect of the splendid new hotel about completed in Tuscaloosa. When mechanics and artisans mount to just proportions in our Southern States, then, and not till then, will the South be what Providence intended it to be.

The press of the State would confer a favor on the people by advising them not to bring patients to the Hospital without first communicating with the Superintendent and learning that the patient will be received. Much annoyance and expense will thereby be saved, as it is simply out of the question to disregard the law and admit indiscriminately all applicants.

We learn from excellent authority that we shall soon have a Telephone connecting the Hospital and Tuscaloosa. The Superintendent is now investigating the relative merits of the Edison and Bell instruments, and as soon as a choice is made will put the Hospital in talking distance of Tuscaloosa. Chicago boasts of lifting three and four storied houses and putting an extra story in at bottom, but that will hardly compare with transporting a whole vast establishment, like ours, a couple of miles; or if one so prefer it, moving Tuscaloosa out to the Hospital.

Who will be the next candidates for the Presidency? Bayard, Hendricks, Tilden, Church, Potter, Grant, Sherman, Blaine, Washburne and about four dozen others have been mentioned. Our candidate is that large hearted patriot, the editor who shall send us free of charge all his scissored exchanges. It don't matter how many speak at once, for if circumstances indicate,

we will divide our influence and advocate the claims of a half-dozen.

#### Manners and Morals of the Age.

Editor of METEOR:—I am a patient. I have not lost interest in the affairs of the world. It is my ambition to return and take part in them. I write to protest against the fallacies which some contributors to the *Era* and *Gazette* are endeavoring to palm upon the public. They affirm that the times are degenerate, that the standards of social conduct have been notoriously abased. A correspondent of the *New Era* writing away out in California arraigns even the press of the country for its degeneracy.

They all err. "Young America" in the *Gazette* of Nov. 27, is somewhat nearer the truth. But even he talks at random about the manners of the age. Now we affirm that of all worlds we ever knew the one we live in is the best. And this is as true of centuries as of worlds. Ill behaved people are to be found at all times, among all peoples. But it is as wrong to condemn a whole generation for the faults of some of its members as it would be to style all the people of a country villains because it was ably represented in the Penitentiary. That social manners are in the main exemplary I am convinced from my experience and observation at the Insane Hospital. It is not unfair, is it to argue that if lunatics behave well sane people behave better? In the Hospital everybody gets up as regularly as the sun rises. All wash and dress and comb their hair preparatory for breakfast. After breakfast they proceed to the Chapel, engage in morning service and retire to their wards with the utmost order and decorum. None of them get drunk, none carry pistols or bowie-knives and at the large parties, concerts, dances and theatricals in the Amusement Hall behave with a decorum that would satisfy a Quaker.

All writers are agreed that in the matter of temperance our age goes far ahead of all that preceded. We never hear now of "gentlemen" at dinner parties drinking till they fall from the table as was early in this century the custom.

As for the degeneracy of the press the California man forgets that George Washington was vexed almost out of life by the habitual distortion of his conduct and motives by the Democratic press of the day. Not only so but so excellent an authority as Jeffries, the Edinburgh

Reviewer that was, declares that it is not wrong to twist your adversary's acts and words into such shapes that he will not acknowledge them as his own. Whitelaw Reid of the *Tribune*, in his Address at Cincinnati, affirmed that to treat our political adversaries with the same fairness and liberality as our friends, is the height of asininity.

Mr. Editor the world grows better instead of worse. Development is a law of moral as of organic nature. No. 2.

There are in the Hospital betwixt one and two hundred dear ones who believe that the sum of the angles of most triangles are less or greater than two right angles. Owing to this disjointure of their mathematical creeds our Editor failed to tame any of them and betook himself to dears that ignore learning and believe with Solomon that there is "nothing better than to eat, drink and enjoy oneself all the days of life." They spell their names with a double "e" and are thus ahead of the human dears and the orthographical revisors in discarding that exploded vowel, "ea."

The North Alabama Conference of the Methodist E. Church very kindly detailed on two successive Sundays a member of their body to preach at the Hospital. The patients were delighted with the discourse of Rev. Mr. Thompson and thought Rev. Mr. Davenport's sermon a little better. So that whatever these gentlemen may think of their own efforts, they may be assured that they gave great pleasure to the inmates.

"The Mischievous Nigger" was brought off at our Amusement Hall and was so successful that it was repeated after a few weeks. Mr. Jno. Wheeler throw into the nigger such a wondrous amount of drollery and impudence and comical blundering as fairly carried captive the audience. Misses Joe. Wiley and Audie King are also entitled to notice for the effective manner in which their parts were rendered.

The communicated conundrum about our Steward is so evidently intended to coax him into a declaration of love that we suppress it. He is indeed young, good-looking and a widower, but we know that he has no thought of marrying again, and we detest unsuccessful love suits. Besides, conundrums about officers are not exactly the thing. Let her fix up as good an one about our Editor and it shall be put in print.